



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

MARINE AIR CONTROL GROUP 28
2D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING
US MARINE CORPS FORCES COMMAND
CHERRY POINT, NORTH CAROLINA 28533-8069

Dear Family Member,

I am Colonel Jeff Merchant, the Commanding Officer of Marine Air Control Group 28. It is an extreme honor and privilege to be your Marine or Sailor's Commanding Officer. You and I share at least two things in common - we are both extremely proud of your Marine or Sailor, and we both care deeply for him or her. I am reaching out to you because I sincerely need your help. Sadly, the suicide rate in our Corps this year has reached an alarming rate. As the father, mother, spouse, or friend of one of our beloved Marines or Sailors, you know them better than anyone else, and I am asking for your help to reverse the tragic trend of suicides within our Marine Corps family.

Although we are still trying to understand all the reasons that would cause any of our Marines or Sailors to take their own life, recent trends point toward a combination of relationship problems and disciplinary trouble. Many times these problems are amplified by deployments and combat-related stress. When facing temporary setbacks in personal relationships or their career, some Marines have lost hope and resorted to suicide. Frequently, these Marines became depressed and withdrew, and mentioned suicide to immediate family members before ending their own life.

I am asking you to please help me help your Marine by watching out for these signs, and informing me immediately if you believe your Marine may be at risk. My pledge to you is that I will do everything within my power to get them the help they need to work through these problems and move forward in a positive direction. I also promise that your Marine's career will not be hurt in any way as a result of asking for help. If you believe that your Marine may be thinking about suicide, please call 252-876-1027 or 252-466-3110, and someone will be available 24-hours a day to quickly place your Marine in contact with a mentor who will get them help.

Please let me emphasize that there is absolutely no shame in asking for help within our Corps. As Marines, one of our most sacred values is that we will never leave a wounded Marine behind on the battlefield. On the battlefield of life, emotional wounds often run deeper than physical wounds. As part of our Marine family, I am asking you to help me ensure that we don't leave any of our Marines behind.

Thank you for your help and your service to our country. I remain respectfully yours,


Colonel Jeff Merchant
U.S. Marine Corps

A World Class Air Command and Control System